

VIRTUAL SITE VISIT:

Washington State Department of Health

Advancing the Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) Capacity Building Initiative and Highlighting Specialized Jurisdictional Support

Field Employees: Desmond Bibio and George Anyumba, Epidemiologists

Purpose: Spotlight Washington Department of Health (DOH) innovations in data modernization, dashboard development and overdose mortality analysis.

OD2A Strategies Discussed

- Surveillance Infrastructure:** Improve and enhance overall capacity to conduct surveillance
- Morbidity:** Collect and disseminate timely data from emergency departments and hospital admissions for suspected overdoses
- Mortality:** Collect and disseminate timely data on unintentional and undetermined intent drug overdose deaths

Local Partnerships

- Washington DOH collaborates with:
- Center for Health Statistics (CHS)
 - Rapid Health Information Network (RHINO)
 - Washington Emergency Medical Services Information System (EMS Data)
 - WA State Patrol Toxicology Lab
 - Maternal & Child Health Programs
 - Health Care Authority
 - Department of Corrections
 - Northwest HIDTA (ORS Program)
 - DOH Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) Epidemiology Team

Data & Surveillance Contributions

- Dashboard Development:** Field staff lead monthly updates for internal and public-facing dashboards.
- Overdose Mortality Analysis:** Field staff analyze State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS) overdose circumstances, hospitalization and injury-related data. They identify trends in fatal and nonfatal overdoses, assess demographic and regional data, track emerging substances (e.g., Xylazine, Nitrene Analogs), examine broader injury causes and contribute to data linkage projects.
- AI Testing & Innovation:** Piloted a public health-focused AI model for SUDORS narrative abstraction and contributed to GitHub repositories for code sharing and geospatial analysis.

Challenges & Opportunities

- Challenge:**
 - Initial tech setup for remote work
 - High complexity of SUDORS abstraction narratives
- Opportunity:**
 - Expanded dashboard capabilities
 - New training in R, ArcGIS and Power BI
 - Successful linkage of overdose data and insight on the circumstances surrounding overdose deaths

JURISDICTION GOALS

Jurisdictions initially set goals to strengthen overdose surveillance and prevention.

- Improve access to overdose surveillance through dashboard updates, data visualizations and public-facing presentations.
- Strengthen data linkage across mortality, EMS and prescription monitoring to uncover geographic and population-based overdose trends.
- Build local and state capacity to inform data-driven prevention strategies that reduce overdose deaths across Washington counties.

OUTCOMES

Field Employees' impact on the Jurisdiction

- Increased Capacity: Field employees lead quarterly data refreshes and fulfill numerous data requests, increasing local responsiveness.
- Collaborative Insight: Custom analyses have been used to guide prevention strategies at local and state levels.
- Data Informed Decision Making: New projects focus on using population level data to better understand the factors leading to increased drug overdoses.

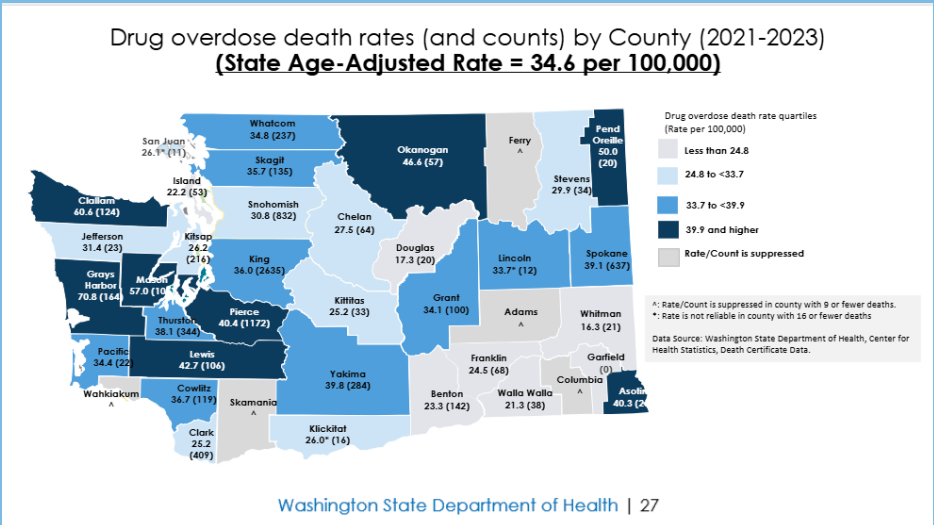
ACTIVITIES

Tasks completed by Field Employees

- Co-designed and updated public and internal overdose data dashboards with direct feedback from state and local partners.
- Established data linkage across multiple systems.
- Developed tailored state and county specific data briefs and factsheets.
- Responded to over 25 requests for data analysis and products from OD2A in States partners, media, the legislature and DOH leadership.

Key Findings

CDC Foundation Field Epidemiologists linked death certificate data to create a map visualizing overdose death rates by county.



Reflections from the Jurisdiction

CDC Foundation has given me the most rewarding experience as an epidemiologist... I have a different view of substance use disorder and inherent struggles. Epidemiology is no longer about data and some distant statistics but is about real people I meet everyday at street corners, some of whom we share experiences and struggles.